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AN AMERICAN OLYMPIAD.

Recreation Departments of the Cities of the United States Foster Move to Include Entire Nation in Plan to Build Up the American Man.

THE sun shone on tier after tier of a tense, silent crowd, and on a score of gleaming, white bodies that skimmed along the ground of the vast stadium. Suddenly out of the group of racers flashed the lithe, fleet form of the tallest to the goal. Thunders of applause rolled from along the seats and rose to the surrounding hills and through the groves if Pisa and out to the shore of the sea. The shouts of approbation that acclaimed the victory of the runner are pierced suddenly by the fanfare of trumpets. A procession of the judges and competitors moves to the tripod erected in the center of the stadium, and upon this elevation rises the victorious youth into the view of the populace. On his brow is placed the wreath of olive leaves, and in his hand a branch of palm.

To all Greece is it proclaimed that Coroebus of Ellis is the victor of the first Olympiad. His fame is to be carried back to Corinth and Argos; the hardy Spartans and the proud Athenians will know their master of the course; far into the little Island of Delos and Tenos is it to be heard that Coroebus on the western shore is the hero of all Greece.

What this scene meant, 2500 years ago, to the citizens of Greece the enactment of similar scenes may tellus soon now that American Olympiads are assured.

From every corner of our country there will come to an appointed center a vast congregation of athletes to compete for the American wreath and palm, and forth from the tournament will come the Ceroebus of the nation who will bear his honors as proudly as did the Grecian youth whose victory made him the most honored of his day.

SUCH is the plan of the National Municipal Recreation Association, a realization of the Olympiad in a modern way. It was the Grecian custom to assemble at Olympia for the festivals in which representatives of the cities of Greece contested for the honor of champion. Long years were spent in training for the games and long years of fame were the reward of victory. Success redounded not only to the winner himself, but also to his family and his city. Though the official prize was the simple crown of leaves and the palm, the province of the winner, his neighbors and all to whom his victory brought rejoicing contributed to his reward so that fortune frequently abided long.

The plan of the Recreation Association is similar in that all the cities of the country shall send their best to a great festival where these choice ones of the nation shall contest.

So far, New York, Baltimore, Hartford, Springfield, Worcester, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Peoria, Minneapolis, Des Moines and St. Louis have joined the federation. Dwight F. Davis of St. Louis, internationally known as a sportsman, is the president of the federation; Cabot Ward, New York, is first vice president; Irwin M. Krohn, Cincinnati, second vice president, and Nelson Cunliff, the park commissioner at St. Louis, is secretary-treasurer.

The plan of the organization is simple but comprehensive. For a municipality to become a member it is necessary that it join as a city through the regular recreation board or through the municipal association, whichever guides the municipal recreation of the locality. Membership is open to every city of the United States. The dues are $10 a year for each city member.

THE Greeks probably heeded more an athletic victory than do we. The fame that accrues to the victor of the Columbiad will not perhaps be less wide, but the rewards will be different. The conventional cups will be given as symbolic of the triumph as were the palm and wreath. The purpose of the modern is the same as the ancient: the benefiting of the citizenry by creating interest in athletic exercises. As the Greeks encouraged athletics to make better Greeks so the men who are back of the proposed meeting aim to make better Americans thereby.

The national games are planned as a further encouragement to the municipal games. The idea back of municipal recreation is the very simple one that a city is as healthy as the individuals that make up that city. And citizens of a municipality are as healthy as the participation in athletics makes them. There follows so clearly the conclusion that the nation will be healthier as the cities' participation in athletics grows.

The first step, of course, is the encouragement of participation in the contests conducted by the various cities. Many cities have progressed very far in municipal recreation. The establishment of playgrounds, the conversion of the public parks from show places to grounds for public exercises, the leagues and competitions that are conducted under the city officials' sponsorship, all are indications that the attitude of the public mind is for the indulgence in athletics.

The ownership of a golf club no longer marks the member of the exclusive country club, and quite intelligent criticism of the bosses' game is frequently heard in the outer offices. St. Louis, for instance, has public golf links that accommodate 10,000 players monthly, and Chicago uses three of the municipally owned links. Cincinnati has two free links, as have New York and many other cities. This is remarkable in that the number of these links indicates the people of the country are using every means to exercise that is afforded them, and a great many who never before had played golf have learned the game because the city had offered them the chance to play it.

Tennis courts beyond counting are offered to the public by the recreation boards of American cities. New York, for instance, has almost 1100 of them, and the other cities of the country have provided hundreds of courts for the wielders of the racket.

Of course, the great national game—baseball—is the most popular form of sport everywhere throughout the country. Municipal control of this game has so extended, and so thorough are its methods that into the curriculum of the public schools of Cincinnati has been introduced a course in umpiring. It may be expected when the contestants of the various cities meet to decide who shall bear off the pennant for baseball, the exhibition will be unique in that a scientifically trained umpire, with a diploma declaring him to be a bachelor of baseball law, will officiate.

THE fact that these contests are open to every one in the United States not a professional will determine more justly than ever just who are the greatest athletes of the country. Heretofore the professional and the college athlete were practically the only ones to whom the opportunity of competing in intersectional meets was given. The athletic club, of course, conducted many of what were termed open meets, but it was usually a matter of much difficulty to bring together a truly representative gathering, and, moreover, many who undoubtedly would have had a chance to do well were prevented from making a showing of their best because they had not had a sufficient opportunity to train, and the altogether unrevealed talents of many were kept out of the contests.

Since the opening of the municipal grounds in the various cities, many champions outside the ranks of the collegians and the clubmen have been developed, and as the disadvantages of the "unattached" are steadily being removed, the playground product is making a mark that previously was unattainable.

The only requirement that is demanded by the recreation association of the candidate for the honors that may be accorded America's greatest is that he be an amateur. This puts the poor and the rich all within the stadium with an open chance to all. The only discrimination suggested, strange to relate, was against the man who was wealthy enough to belong to a private club with its own athletic fields.

This suggestion was considered as attacking the democracy of the movement and was rejected. No restriction of any sort is made except that all contestants be known as regular users of the public grounds. The interpretation of this requirement is left to the individual city's judgment. The great finals, however, are to be held only on municipally owned grounds.

When the gates are thrown open to the citizens to witness the Columbiad, no fleeted ones of Maine nor of Tallahassee nor Waco nor Spokane must remain in pining on his native cinder path because the great meet is as far from his home as Thebes was from Pisa, which is to describe a great distance. The expense of travel and the incidentals that go to maintaining the athlete in the City of Columbiad will be paid by the city that he represents. Preliminary intersectional meets, of course, will be held to keep down expenses and to avoid tediousness in the main meeting. The elimination of too much traveling will hold down expenses.

The intersectional contests that will eliminate unnecessary travel, the attendant expense, and the bulkiness of entries that would make the scheme impracticable are to be avoided by divisions to be held this year in New York for the Eastern section, Chicago for the Central section, Minneapolis for the Western section, and the final of the Columbiad will be held in St. Louis, as a courtesy to the city wherein the federation was organized. Various prominent sportsmen in the different sections are in charge of the intersectional matches. Because of lateness in the present season, when the organization of the cities was effected, the only competition to be held in 1916 are those in golf and tennis. In these there will be matches in all of the cities, and then sectional, and, as semifinals, intersectional matches. The victors in these contests will come to St. Louis for the finals. Permanent trophies have been donated for these games, and the rivalry between cities as exhibited in the sectional matches is very keen.

NEXT year the federation will launch its great meeting of the nation's athletes in complete tournament of all sports, track, swimming, baseball, golf, tennis, football, gymnastics and every form of exercise that is enjoyed throughout the country. What effect this will have in matters other than physical must appear to commend it. The wide intercourse that this promotes will bring about a spirit of friendliness that practically no other means can effect. Aside from the unity of official action in recreation movements which itself will be of incalculable benefit to the participating municipalities, the meeting of the youth of the nation from all parts and the fellowship that results from acquaintance under such circumstances make the great meeting a means of nationalizing the sections that only a military system could supply.

It is not the concern of the men who are fostering the great national athletic festival to merely stage a spectacle that will rival the scenes in the ancient stadia, nor are they much concerned with the development of athletics for its own sake, but they are moved by the realization that a national meet such as the municipal recreations bureaus are capable of engineering will stir an interest in healthful exercise that will benefit the whole nation.

There is little doubt as to the country's acceptance of the plan. The eagerness with which the playground scheme was seized upon by the people of every city as a means of enjoying the previously withheld pleasures of the out of doors indicates that the spirit is favorable to further moves in this direction. And the very magnificent plan that is proposed by the National Municipal Recreation Federation cannot fail to appeal to all America. We may hope to be able to hail with all justice the American Olympic hero in the future.

Bears Are the Best Swimmers

IN spite of the fact that man is not an instinctive swimmer, as are most of the lower animals, he excels all of the latter that are not aquatic in endurance in the water. It is reported that in attempting to swim across the English Channel recently, a man covered thirty miles before he succumbed to exhaustion. The only land animals that are known to be able to approximate such a feat are bears, which are probably the strongest swimmers among animals not specially adapted by nature for the water.

Deer and horses rank next to bears in swimming powers. Deer swim rapidly and gracefully, and it is not uncommon for them to cover a distance of ten or fifteen miles in the water. Horses are powerful swimmers and have none of the aversion toward entering the water which is often shown even by animals which can swim well when forced to.

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Cats Drown Readily.

The elephant is a good swimmer, and the wild animals of the cat family, the tiger, the panther, the jaguar and others do not hesitate to cross lakes and rivers. On the other hand, the domestic cat shrinks from immersion, and drowns quickly. The nostrils of some small animals are so placed as to render breathing very difficult when they are in the water. Among these are mice and rabbits, which will drown without sinking beneath the surface. Rats are excellent swimmers.

Almost all birds except these which are distinctly natatorial are nearly helpless in water. Small birds, in particular, have no power of propulsion, and though they do not sink, they drown quickly. Even many species of water fowl rise from the water with difficulty or not at all when their wings are wet. After a sea gull plunges and returns to the surface it stretches its wings so that they may be dried by the wind and sun before it attempts to fly.

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Snakes Dangerous When Afloat.

All reptiles swim. Almost all snakes move through the water with as much ease and rapidity as on land. Rattlesnakes, for example, are much given to swimming in placid water if it is not too cold. In the everglade lakes of Florida they are often seen. It is well known that to attack from a boat a poisonous snake in the water is a much more dangerous proceeding than to attack the snake on land.

The reason is that the reptile will immediately make for the boat, since it must have a solid base from which to strike. It half leaps and half climbs into the craft, and there is a fight at uncomfortably close quarters.

Fishermen on Grand Bank Risk Lives for Wages Average Day Laborer Would Scorn

OF all the precarious occupations in the world, the fisherman's life is the most uncertain. He has to be a sailor, to begin with, and before he finishes the voyage he may have to be cook, carpenter, sailmaker and to wind up a shipwrecked mariner.

To be a fiesherman, a man must be possessed of an iron constitution, be perfectly fearless, and at the same time able to live on a pittance.

It is a shameful fact that the hardy fishermen of the New England coast risk their lives for wages that the day laborer of the city would despise.

This is partly due to necessity and partly to choice. "Like father, like son," is a proverb especially applicable to the New England Coast.

There are families in Rhode Island, Maine and Connecticut where all the male members for three generations have gained their living from the sea.

It is a precarious life, where a "good catch" means a full larder and a "poor haul" hardship and privation.

In the days gone by, the New England sailors were nearly all whalers, and many a family has been enriched by two or three lucky voyages.

Cod, halibut and mackerel are now the chief reliance of the fishermen, and although much of the danger of whale fishing has been eliminated, the danger from the elements is equally as great, and perhaps greater.

The mackerel fishery is very important, and the fishing is generally carried on in the spring and summer, when the fish come to the shallow waters of the coast to spawn, returning to the deep water at the beginning of winter. They swim in shoals or schools, and are caught with hook and line or with nets or seines. These nets are drawn up alongside the boats, and the seines are then scooped out with a dip net.

The halibut now forms a considerable part of the world's fish supply, although the flesh is not to be compared in quality to the turbot. It is of great value to the Greenlanders, who cut it into long strips and dry it in the air, about the same as our Western hunters used to "jerk" buffalo meat. Sometimes they salt and dry these strips.

They spear the fish from boats with a harpoon; but our fishermen use a hook and line. It is something of a trick to land a halibut, as they rarely weigh less than 50 pounds, and sometimes attain the length of 6 feet and the weight of 500 pounds.